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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KVPR](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CVIS](#) [ASEC](#) [KHLs](#) [EI](#)

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR IRISH GOVERNMENT PRACTICES ON
INFORMATION COLLECTION, SCREENING AND SHARING

REF: A) SECSTATE 32287
B) 07 DUBLIN 859

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¶1. While Ireland is taking steps to enhance the amount of information it collects on travelers entering the country, it faces an uphill battle. Irish laws limiting the use of public data, public skepticism and the lack of enabling legislation are stalling efforts to upgrade the quality of data collection. This cable responds to the questions posed ref tel A.

IMMIGRATION DATA BASES AND TRAVELER INFORMATION COLLECTION

¶2. Ireland does not currently have a system in place to collect either Passenger Name Record (PNR) data nor does it have an advance passenger information system (APIS). The Department of Justice is currently preparing a tender for the development of an APIS system, but it is being stalled by a lack of enabling legislation. Desmond Foley, of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, who is tasked with developing the tender, told EMBOFF that a pilot program may be put in place while the system is being developed.

¶3. Ireland's sea traffic remains a thorny problem. Most of Ireland's sea travelers come and go from UK ports and are not required to present passports before boarding, nor are they carefully inspected upon arrival, under the Anglo-Irish Common Travel Area (ref B). Until that situation changes, Irish authorities acknowledge that APIS cannot be implemented for those ports of entry (POE).

¶4. The Ministry of Justice, Equality and Law Reform oversees the collection of traveler information. Governing their actions on this point are Ireland's data protection laws. They mandate that information collected by the government can only be used for the purpose for which it was collected. Due to these limitations, the government is focusing its efforts on developing the APIS for now. Legislation would be required to upgrade to a PNR system.

WATCHLISTING AND BIOMETRICS

¶5. Ireland maintains its own internal watchlists. These lists are drawn up through information-sharing between government departments and coordinated by the Depart of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. There is no current effort to provide information on the Irish watch lists to other governments.

¶6. The Irish government does have an automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS). Electronic fingerprint collection

began in November 2007. The AFIS system is not fully installed at every Irish POE - airports are being outfitted with the system first. Because ferry passengers don't travel on passports, Irish authorities note that AFIS cannot be implemented at their seaports. Ireland's AFIS system is NIST compliant.

BORDER CONTROL AND SCREENING

¶7. Currently, there is no software in place to screen travelers of security interest. That is purpose for the APIS tender. Generally speaking, travelers by road or sea are not tracked electronically. Most crossings, entries and exits are non-recorded. The Garda National Immigration Bureau staffs immigration checkpoints at all ports of entry, and has the authority to detain or question any traveler, using the same general guidelines that apply to US Customs and Border Protection officers. Routine, thorough checks are only conducted at airports.

Passports

¶8. Ireland currently issues machine readable biometric passports. The electronic chip contains the same details as can be found on the biographic page of the passport: name, date of birth, place of birth, and a copy of the photograph. According to Deirdre Fanning with the Department of Foreign Affairs Passport Office, adding further information such as fingerprint or other biometric details would be difficult politically, given Irish privacy and information-sharing sensitivities. Ireland is not a Schengen Zone country and is therefore not bound by EU directives in this regard.

¶9. The passport office operates two centers in the Dublin area that

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print the majority of Irish passports. Diplomatic posts outside Ireland have the capability of printing emergency passports, which are generally limited to 11 months or less in duration. They are similar to the current EPDP produced by US embassies, as they are machine readable and feature a digital photograph on a foil that is covered by a thin laminated layer. They do not contain biometric information. All Irish emergency passports begin with the letter "X". Full validity Irish passports currently all begin with the letter "P".

¶10. Generally, Irish citizens who lose or have a passport stolen are required to apply for a full-validity replacement. In certain cases, habitual offenders will receive a replacement with only a year or two of validity. Because the Irish government is now electronically storing passport photographs, a one to one comparison is made for applicants who apply for replacements.

FRAUD, PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY AND APPROPRIATE PARTNERS

¶11. Based on its recent history as a destination for illegal immigrants and asylum seekers during the boom years of the Celtic Tiger, Ireland has vigorous anti-fraud measures. An on-going high-profile case involves a Nigerian woman who sought asylum based on fears that her daughters might be subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM), who may end up being deported due to the discovery that a fraudulent document was used to support her case.

¶12. Ireland has stringent data protection legislation. It applies to all data collected by the government and requires that this information can only be used for the purpose for which it was collected.